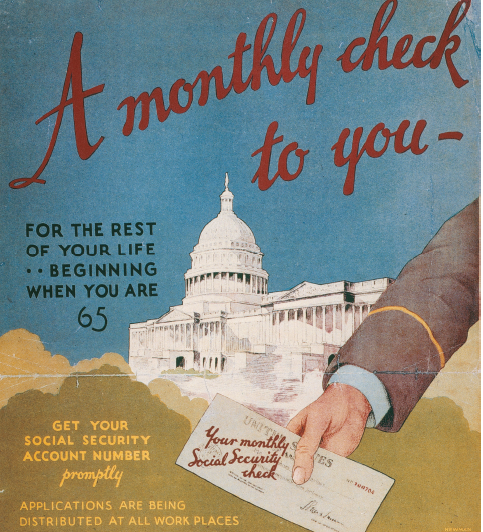
**01 A Changing America**

Print It and Get Going

**Study on the Go**

Print out these study cards and take them with you. It's the perfect way to get that last minute cramming session in before your exam.

[Print](http://thethinkspot.com/system/pdf/ThinkSpot-american-gov-2010-chapter01.pdf)

The aging of the U.S. population will have a major impact on government programs and policies.

**The Cultural, International, and Socio-economic Context for Policymaking**

**Agenda Building**

* The policymaking environment creates the context in which individuals and groups raise issues to the policy agenda. For example, as the baby-boom generation reaches retirement, the policy agenda will increasingly reflect the interests and demands of older adults. Healthcare and retirement income security will claim a higher place on the policy agenda.
* Patterns of income distribution impact attitudes about government programs. African Americans and Latinos are more likely to favor government healthcare and income security programs than are whites and Asian Americans because they are more in need of government assistance.

**Policy Formulation and Adoption**

* Political culture limits the range of acceptable policy alternatives available to policymakers. Policy solutions that are widely perceived as undemocratic or contrary to the nation’s capitalist traditions are not politically feasible.
* The nation's economy affects policy formulation as well. A healthy economy generates tax revenues that can be used to tackle policy problems, whereas a stagnant economy reduces the options of policymakers.
* Policy adoption is affected by environmental factors. Consider the impact of population aging on the budget process. The aging of the population is draining the budget of resources that could be used to support new government programs.

**Policy Implementation and Evaluation**

* Cultural, international, demographic, and economic factors affect policy implementation. The ability of the government to implement expensive policies successfully may depend on long-term economic growth sufficient to generate revenue.
* Environmental factors also influence policy evaluation. Americans evaluate policies from the perspectives of the broad political culture--capitalism and democracy. Groups of Americans that are numerous and groups that are economically advantaged are better positioned to make their voices heard in evaluating policies than smaller groups with relatively fewer resources.

**Key Terms**

**Baby Boom Generation**

the exceptionally large number of Americans born during the late 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s

**Democracy**

a system of government in which ultimate political authority is vested in the people

**Developing Countries**

nations with relatively low levels of per capita income

**Frostbelt**

the northeastern and midwestern regions of the United States

**Global Economy**

the integration of national economies into a world economic system in which companies compete worldwide for suppliers and markets

**Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**

the total value of goods and services produced by a nation's economy in a year, excluding transactions with foreign countries.

**Medicaid**

a federal program designed to provide health insurance coverage to low-income persons, people with disabilities, and elderly people who are impoverished

**Medicare**

a federally funded health insurance program for the elderly

**Per Capita**

per person

**Political Culture**

the widely held, deeply rooted political values of a society

**Poverty Threshold**

the amount of money an individual or family needs to purchase basic necessities, such as food, clothing, healthcare, shelter, and transportation

**Social Security**

a federal pension and disability insurance program funded through a payroll tax on workers and their employers

**Standard of Living**

the goods and services affordable to and available to the residents of a nation

**Sunbelt**

the southern and western regions of the United States

**Discussion Questions**

1. Explain how demographic change (in particular, immigration) affects the environment for policymaking.

2. Describe the population of the U.S. in terms of racial and ethnic diversity and place of residence (rural or urban, Sunbelt or Frostbelt).

3. What is the official definition of poverty? Has the incidence of poverty in the U.S. been increasing or decreasing in recent years? Among which groups of Americans is the incidence of poverty the highest?

4. What is political culture? According to scholars, what are the sources of America’s political culture? What are the main elements of the nation’s political culture? What is the relationship between political culture and policymaking?

5. Compare and contrast the liberal and conservative positions on the following issues: national health care, consumer protection laws, the regulation of pornography, environmental protection regulations, same-sex marriage, Social Security reform, and federally funded job training programs.

**Interactive Activity**

**Debate: Immigration**

Immigration has long been a controversial issue in the United States. In this debate activity, you will review both sides of the debate over immigration and then take and defend a position of your own. Does immigration help the United States by enriching America's cultural diversity and providing productivity to the U.S. economy? Or does immigration hurt the United States by undercutting U.S. culture and displacing American workers? Do the benefits of immigration outweigh the costs, or is it the other way around?

[View Debate](http://media.pearsoncmg.com/long/long_longman_media_1/2008_raised/Player/deb.immigration.html)

**“Talking About American Government” Podcasts**

Author Neal Tannahill discusses the most important concepts in this chapter.

* [Democracy](http://abavtooldev.pearsoncmg.com/VPStreaming/audio.php?clipID=ab_amgov_think_tennahill/ch01_democracy.mp3)
* [Demographic Change](http://abavtooldev.pearsoncmg.com/VPStreaming/audio.php?clipID=ab_amgov_think_tennahill/ch01_demographic_change.mp3)
* [The Global Economy](http://abavtooldev.pearsoncmg.com/VPStreaming/audio.php?clipID=ab_amgov_think_tennahill/ch01_global_economy.mp3)